



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, THE ACRE, LOWELL

**MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> AUGUST TO FRIDAY 20<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2010**

### CALL FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

The *Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program* was established following the signing of an agreement of understanding between UMass Lowell and Queen's University Belfast in March 2009. The objective is to enable students to gain a deeper understanding of the life of the Irish in Ireland before and after the Great Famine, and the role played by the Irish in the development of the USA during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We intend to commence fieldwork this August with a week-long excavation in Lowell to investigate the site of an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Irish settlement at St. Patrick's Church.

**WE ARE OFFERING SIX *STIPENDED* PLACES FOR STUDENTS  
FROM UMASS LOWELL TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EXCAVATION**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Dr Frank Talty at [francis\\_talty@uml.edu](mailto:francis_talty@uml.edu) or at 978-934-4328**

## INTRODUCTION

In 1822 a group of 30 Irish labourers led by Hugh Cummiskey arrived in the new industrial town of Lowell to assist with the excavation of the Pawtucket and Merrimack canals. By 1831 their numbers had swelled to over 400 and Kirk Boott, mill manager, had donated a plot of company land for a Catholic church – St. Patrick's Church. This event marked the permanent settlement of the Irish in the town, with the area around the church becoming known as the "Irish Acre," the "Paddy Camps" or "New Dublin".

The old church was constructed in what had been a shanty town, with the cabins of the Irish immigrants built right up to the sides of the church. The area was landscaped and changed when the old timber church was replaced in 1854 with a neo-Gothic stone church. From cartographic and pictorial evidence it would seem, however, that the area to the front of the church has remained unchanged since that time and remains in lawn. As such, the archaeological excavation will open two trenches to see what – if anything – can be found relating to the shanty town and its original inhabitants.

## COURSE CONTENT

The work at St Patrick's Church will be undertaken from Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August to Friday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010. Excavation is an important method of gathering archaeological data and understanding sites in the field; indeed, to some it is the fundamental skill of the archaeologist. **Students participating on the program, however, do not need to have gained prior experience of working on an archaeological excavation.** This is a training excavation. As such, participants will be provided with introductory training in excavation methodology such as identifying, excavating and recording individual layers and features in the soil (archaeological contexts), relating the contexts to each other in a time sequence (stratigraphy), and the recording of associated artefacts.

The main objective of the exercise is to teach the practical skills of archaeological excavation in the field. This is a fundamental tool for gathering archaeological data; as such, an understanding of the methods of excavation and their limitations in practice is basic to the discipline. The excavation is also a research exercise and by the end of the fieldwork period the students should be familiar with how a research strategy is developed and implemented in the field. The students should also be aware of how the results obtained in the field can help to increase our understanding of a particular monument, the period in which it belongs, and our knowledge of the archaeology of the region in which it is set.

## STIPEND AND ACCOMODATIONS

Students will stay at the U Mass Lowell Inn & Conference Center. Room charges will be covered and a stipend of \$350 paid to each student who successfully completes the program.

## PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EXCAVATION

### 1. *Working Arrangements*

The Administrative Director for the programme is Dr Frank Talty, Co-Director of the UMass Lowell Center for Irish Partnerships, and Director of Academic Programs in the university's College of Arts and Science. The Academic Director for the excavation will be Dr Colm Donnelly, Director of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF) at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland, assisted by two of his colleagues from the CAF, Dr Harry Welsh and Ronan McHugh. The excavation will generate local interest and David McKean, historian and archivist for St Patrick's Parish, has kindly agreed to oversee interaction with the local community during the course of our work.

We will be working a five-day week on site, commencing work at 9.00am and finishing work at 5.00pm each day. During the course of the working day there will be two short 15-minute breaks and a 45-minute break for lunch. Toilet facilities are available on site. Smoking will be restricted to a designated area away from the excavation trenches, and CD players and radios should not be brought on site. Students should bring a packed lunch and drink with them on site each day. Members of the public will be visiting in the area where we are working and you are therefore requested to conduct yourself well at all times.

Remember that excavation involves physical effort and all students must be fit enough to dig, shovel, and trowel, carry buckets and wheelbarrows.

### 2. *Clothing*

Given that we will be working outdoors you will require waterproof and windproof clothing. Working shoes or preferably boots should be worn on site. Trainers and other light shoes do not provide adequate protection for your feet. Please bring plenty of water, sun cream and a hat.

### 3. *Health and Safety*

There will be a Health and Safety lecture on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August which all students must attend. Each student will also receive a Safety Booklet. ***Each student MUST print out the***

***last page and sign the declaration that they have read and understood the contents of the Safety Booklet.***

Each student must also complete a Confidential Medical Questionnaire on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August which will then be collected by the Administrative Director.

***You should ensure that you have an up-to-date inoculation against tetanus***

While every effort will be made to ensure the safety of the crew at all times, each student has a duty to behave in a responsible manner. ***Do not engage in any form of horse-play. Those who do engage in horseplay will be dealt with severely.***

#### **4. Equipment**

All excavation equipment will be provided but bring gloves (cloth, gardening gloves such as those obtainable from any gardening or hardware shop) with you. A Swiss Army knife can also be invaluable, as can be a packet of baby-wipes for cleaning your hands before eating.

### **PROGRAMME OF WORK**

#### **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August**

|       |  |          |
|-------|--|----------|
| 9.00  | Introduction to the Program                    | (FT/CJD) |
| 9.15  | Archaeological Excavation – An Introduction    | (CJD)    |
| 10.00 | Health & Safety on Archaeological Excavations  | (HW)     |
| 10.30 | Break  |          |
| 10.45 | From Crossan to Lowell: The Historical Context | (CJD)    |
| 11.30 | Lunch  |          |
| 12.30 | Commence work on site                          |          |

#### **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August to Friday 20<sup>th</sup> August**

|       |                       |
|-------|-----------------------|
| 9.00  | Commence work on site |
| 11.00 | Break (15 minutes)    |
| 1.00  | Lunch (45 minutes)    |
| 3.00  | Break (15 minutes)    |